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ABSTRACT

This guide for inclusion facilitators was developed as part of New Hampshire's Inclusion Facilitators Support Network, created as an activity of the New Hampshire Statewide Systems Change Project. The Network provides a forum for Inclusion Facilitators to meet, share ideas and strategies, and discuss the latest innovations in inclusive education. The Statewide Systems Change Project was designed to increase the capacity of school districts to include students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms and neighborhood schools. An introduction reviews the trend toward more inclusive schools and considers the role of special educators as inclusion facilitators. The next sections consider aspects of the inclusion facilitator's role and recommend specific strategies in the areas of: (1) advocacy; (2) family involvement; (3) facilitation of peer supports and friendships; (4) curriculum modification; (5) collaboration; and (6) coordination of supports. Appendices provide: a checklist to evaluate a school's or school district's practices and philosophy regarding inclusion, one parent's ideas concerning the ideal individualized education program meeting, a flow chart of curriculum modification and student supports, and a list of suggested resources for curriculum modification and classroom strategies. (Contains 35 references.) (DB)

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The Role of the Inclusion Facilitator

University of New Hampshire

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Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes

The Role of the Inclusion Facilitator

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DEDICATION

As schools work to include all students in regular education classes and the doors of special education classrooms close, a new professional role emerges...the role of the Inclusion Facilitator. From the very beginning, the heart and soul for this book has come from Inclusion Facilitators working throughout the state of New Hampshire. It is their celebrated successes and honest struggles that fill the pages to follow. Without the contributions of these committed professionals, this book could not have been written. Their talent and wisdom mark every page. Through the sharing of their stories, this book grew from a manual of techniques into a book rich with strategies born of experience.

This book is dedicated to *all* of the Inclusion Facilitators working in inclusive schools throughout the state of New Hampshire. We give special thanks to the following members of the Inclusion Facilitators Support Network for their generous contributions to this book:

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FOREWORD

In 1990, New Hampshire's Inclusion Facilitators Support Network was created as an activity of the New Hampshire Statewide Systems Change Project. The Network provides a forum for Inclusion Facilitators to meet, share ideas and strategies, and discuss the latest innovations in inclusive education.

The Statewide Systems Change Project, a joint project of the Institute on Disability/UAP and the New Hampshire Department of Education, was designed to increase the capacity of school districts in New Hampshire to include students with severe disabilities in regular education classrooms and neighborhood schools. In order to encourage Inclusion Facilitators in their new roles and to enhance their skills and beliefs, the Project provided them with training and technical assistance. The Inclusion Facilitators Support Network was a logical extension of this assistance. Its commitment to redefine and restructure educational roles and practices for all New Hampshire educators became the impetus for the development of this book. We hope that both new and experienced Inclusion Facilitators will learn from the hard work and trial and error of their New Hampshire colleagues.

The Statewide Systems Change Project is a five-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (Grant #H086J80011-89), awarded to the New Hampshire Special Education Bureau for an inclusive education project with the Institute on Disability/UAP, University of New Hampshire. The contents of this book do not necessarily represent the policy or position of the U.S. Department of Education.

By keeping students out of regular classes we give strong messages that some do not belong in society, or some of us are better than others. This indicates to all students that anyone less than perfect is unacceptable.

Camille Valenza

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MAGGIE'S STORY

Maggie graduated from college with a degree in special education and spent 10 years teaching students with moderate and severe disabilities in a number of schools and classes. She taught in a state institution, a residential school, and a regional day school solely for students with autism. In 1988, Maggie moved to New Hampshire and began teaching in a self-contained special education classroom in a small public elementary school. Of all of her jobs, this was the one that Maggie will always refer to as the "turning point" in her career.

That year, the "winds of inclusion" were blowing through New Hampshire. Because of her interests and her experience, Maggie began attending workshops that focused on a completely new and somewhat challenging idea -- including students with severe disabilities in regular education classes. Maggie knew in her heart that this idea could work (although she had little idea of how to make it work) and she eagerly approached her school principal with the idea. "Give it a try," the principal said encouragingly.

Maggie began slowly but surely. She met regularly with parents and teachers, and together they worked out ways to include "her" students into regular classes. Maggie would be the first to tell you it wasn't always easy; "trial and error" were the words she lived by. But Maggie quickly saw the immense gains that the students were making in regular classes and with typical peers. In fact, Maggie, too, was learning -- especially how to balance her desire to "hold on" to "her" kids while knowing that "letting go" would best meet their educational needs.

Much of what Maggie was doing from the start was offering support to the other teachers in her school. These teachers knew that Maggie was their resource, and daily they sought Maggie's help. Interacting with other teachers in her building was extremely satisfying, but Maggie was hungry to find other special educators who were taking on this new role. The idea was so new in New Hampshire that there weren't many others. "Someday," Maggie remembers thinking, "there will be plenty of educators throughout the state doing what I'm doing, because it's the right thing to do, and it works."

It is important to be sure that support services are provided in a reasonable way... a way that works for the classroom teacher. The Inclusion Facilitator needs to be flexible enough to accommodate the teacher's schedule.

Maureen Hutton

EVOLUTION OF CHANGE

In education, as in life, change is constant. Educational practices -- like just about every other "solid and tested" theory -- have changed dramatically throughout the years.

As Maggie learned in 1988, the old "tried and true" practices of educating students with disabilities were not the best. As recently as the early 1980's, educational practices dictated that students with severe disabilities be educated in separate schools and classes, apart from their typical peers. However, parents and educators began to face the evidence that this practice was not meeting the needs of students with disabilities, nor the needs of the community in general (Biklen, 1985; Brown et al., 1988; Fox, 1987; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). Through evaluation and questioning, parents and educators began the search for alternatives, for new ideas, for a "new wind," so to speak.

We now know that students with disabilities are best educated when they are full-time members of typical age-appropriate classrooms in neighborhood schools (Biklen, 1985; Brinker, 1984; Brown et al., 1988; Brown, Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski, 1976; Halvorsen & Sailor, 1990; Strully & Strully, 1987; Thousand & Villa, 1989).

With this change, systems had to develop to support students, teachers, and parents. Educating students with disabilities in regular neighborhood schools and classrooms meant that educators, related service providers, and families had to change the way in which they promoted best educational practices for all students.

Today, we no longer assume that the *special student* will arrive by *special bus* at a *special class* taught by a *special teacher* according to a *special schedule and curriculum*. In fact, we generally try to avoid using the word *special* when planning and describing the education of students who have disabilities.

Undoubtedly one of the biggest changes for schools embracing inclusion is the elimination of the model of exclusion or "pull out" services. We now bring support services to the students in regular education settings, allowing them to learn in classes with their peers (Ford, 1989; Giangreco, 1990; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Stainback, Stainback & Forest, 1989; Thousand & Villa, 1990; Vandercook & York, 1989; York et al., 1989). Educators, related service providers, students, and families now work together as collaborative team members, not isolated experts. In this way, we all provide the supports necessary for students with disabilities to be successfully educated alongside their typical peers.

Advocating for inclusion is an ongoing, everyday process. Making sure that all students are valued for "who they are" is one of my most important jobs.

Camille Valenza

A NEW ROLE

An important change necessitated by the "new wind" of inclusion is the evolution of a new professional role. The special education teacher takes on new responsibilities characterized by collaboratively consulting with *all* teachers, related service providers, and parents. This new role also includes coordinating services for students who are members of regular classrooms. Quite simply, this role is to provide and coordinate the supports that enable the successful inclusion of students with disabilities.

As this new role evolved, the search began for an appropriate job title. We have chosen the title "Inclusion Facilitator" as the term used throughout this book, as we believe it accurately reflects the true mission of the person accepting this role.

Throughout New Hampshire, an Inclusion Facilitator is that person whose job it is to facilitate, however necessary, the full inclusion of students who have disabilities as active, participating learners in regular age-appropriate classes and neighborhood schools.

Given the move toward fully inclusive education, the demand for skilled Inclusion Facilitators has greatly increased during the past five years. In 1988 we knew of only one educator in New Hampshire who had a job description which reflected her role as an Inclusion Facilitator. Today, there are more than 60 members of New Hampshire's Inclusion Facilitators Support Network. These members work daily to support full inclusion in their schools and in the state.

HOW TO BEGIN

Our purpose for writing this book is to provide guidance (dare we say "words of wisdom") to both new and experienced Inclusion Facilitators. Each chapter includes anecdotal stories, discussion, and strategies. Our research and information comes from you and your colleagues who shared their stories as well as their "best practices." Contributing to this book were Inclusion Facilitators who told us they wanted to assist others in forming a process to best support the value they hold dear -- schools must be welcoming places for all students. This book highlights the best in all of us as evidenced in the stories and examples woven throughout. It is important to recognize, however, that behind every success story, there lies a journey in which commitment, hard work, and humor paved the way. The purpose of this book is not to create unrealistic expectations for Inclusion Facilitators, but to create a vision for the potential of this new and exciting role.

The role of the Inclusion Facilitator is a dynamic one, changing and growing as inclusion practices become increasingly comprehensive and sophisticated. Clearly, Inclusion Facilitators must maintain professional flexibility as their role descriptions evolve to keep pace with the changes occurring in schools and communities. This evolution is both exciting and challenging -- as New Hampshire Inclusion Facilitators know first-hand. The Institute on Disability/UAP, University of New Hampshire, is proud to celebrate these dedicated professionals who work so diligently to keep the vision, spirit, and reality of inclusion alive.

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LUNCH IS MORE THAN JUST A MEAL

The teachers' lounge in the middle school is a lively place as teachers come and go throughout the school day. Today, at lunch time, a small group of teachers sit and talk as they eat their lunch. The conversation moves easily from politics to movies and then settles on the topic of inclusion. One teacher brings up the names of two students with disabilities who are in the fourth grade at the elementary school and wonders aloud if they will be coming to the middle school next year. How will they participate in fifth grade classes, she wonders?

Sitting in this informal lunch group is Linda, the district's Inclusion Facilitator. She joins the conversation by beginning to talk to the teachers about the two students and the tremendous benefits they and their classmates have reaped from fourth grade this year. Linda knows to use "people-first" language to describe the students -- for example, she says, "Cory, who happens to have autism," and "Amelia, who uses a wheelchair." She speaks of these students as individuals with many gifts and capabilities. The teachers become more involved as she shares some typical fourth grade stories about each student (a crush on a classmate, a book report lost on the playground) and describes in some detail the ways in which each student fully participates in fourth grade lessons and activities. Most importantly, Linda asks the teachers what support and information they would need to feel more comfortable with the student's transition to middle school. The teachers have many questions and ideas, and Linda leaves the lunch group with a multi-faceted promise -- she is going to schedule teacher visitations, a workshop on inclusion, and meetings between fourth and fifth grade teachers. Linda says she will coordinate regular meetings with the fifth grade teachers before the school year begins and throughout the next school year.

A quick look at the lounge clock reminds the teachers that it's back to the classroom. The teachers return to their classes less anxious and more excited about next year. Linda feels encouraged by their openness and knows that next year will work out just fine.

As a former classroom teacher, I know how many wonderful thing go on in a classroom. All students should be a part of this.

Mary Timson

ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSION

The success or failure of inclusion depends not upon the characteristics of a student, but instead on the vision, commitment, and creativity of families, educators, and administrators. It follows then, that one role of an Inclusion Facilitator is to continuously reinforce that vision and commitment. Advocating for inclusion as a value and a philosophy, as well as a practice, is a critical role of the Inclusion Facilitator.

For many classroom teachers and administrators, inclusion has provided them with their first experiences with students who have significant disabilities. The Inclusion Facilitator can demonstrate, through word and deed, that a student with disabilities is a student first, and needs to be treated in an age-appropriate, respectful manner. Speaking to, and not about, a student will assist other adults and students in showing the same respect. Inclusion Facilitators encourage others to assume a student's competence by emphasizing a student's abilities and contributions, rather than disabilities and deficits. In all parameters of the job -- from meetings to playgrounds -- the Inclusion Facilitator has the opportunity to advocate value and respect for all students.

Inclusion Facilitators work with teachers and students to advocate for inclusion. For example, the Inclusion Facilitator can teach a student's peers how to use her/his communication device. During the same day, she may offer support to a teacher on developing modifications of lesson plans to meet the needs of individual students. Inclusion Facilitators advocate for a student's full participation in the classroom. Sometimes simply asking "How will Adam do this?" will lead staff and students to define their own problem-solving methods as a way to naturaliy include the student. By conveying an attitude of optimism, high expectations, and "we can do it" spirit, the Inclusion Facilitator effectively demystifies the student and the process.

As an advocate for inclusion, I believe in it so strongly that no argument against it could ever sway me. I have seen it work and I know that it is the right thing for all students, classes and schools.

Camille Valenza

STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSION

Disseminate articles, books, pictures, and videos that demonstrate the success of inclusion in your school and throughout the state. Make these materials available to teachers, administrators, parents, school boards, and community members.

2. ***Schedule workshops*** on inclusive education in your school(s). Invite teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members. Vary the workshop presenters -- remember that strong and convincing presentations can be made by parents, people with disabilities, students, and teachers. All should have the opportunity to present their stories.

3. ***Use language and behavior that shows respect and value*** for all students' abilities. Treat all students in an age-appropriate manner. Talk with, not about, students and include students in conversations.

4. ***Use people-first language*** at all times ("a boy who has Down Syndrome", "Leah, a student who has physical disabilities"). This conveys to the listener that the disability is simply one characteristic of the whole individual. Encourage others to use people-first language.

5. ***Encourage your school district to develop an Inclusive Education Committee*** (or better yet, make sure these issues are discussed as a part of a School Improvement Committee). Advocate for the committee to include students, families, people with disabilities, and community members. Use the checklist, *Is It REALLY Inclusion?*, provided in Appendix 1, to promote best practices in your district.

6. ***Give positive feedback***, including letters of recognition and notes of appreciation, to those who have been successful at teaching all students. Invite the local media to come into the school to recognize these individuals through articles and photographs.

7. ***Remember all personnel who can offer support*** to students and to you. For example, invite custodians, nurses, and secretaries to inclusion workshops. Include them in your appreciation and recognition efforts.

8. ***Advocate for individual students.*** Assist others in seeing a student's abilities. Make certain that each student actively participates in all class and school events and routines (including homeroom, locker, desk, books, papers, and same report card as all other students).

9. ***Become active in the community*** by serving on regional or state committees. Attend school board and PTO meetings, join school committees. The more interest you show, the more support you will be offered.

10. ***Include typical community organizations and supports*** (Girl Scouts, Boys Club) in each student's individual education plan. This can support a student's full participation in all aspects of the community. Make certain that these community events occur at times that are typical for all students (after-school, weekends, summer). Do not support students with disabilities leaving the school building during times of the day when all other students are in school.

Family Involvement

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

The first week of school is always hectic. Teachers, students, and parents all have varying degrees of difficulty adjusting to the structured routine of school after those lazy days of summer.

This year, there's particular excitement in the Garcia home. Along with all the usual bustle of getting ready for a new school year, James Garcia, 11 years old, is getting ready to go to his home school for the first time.

James will enter Main Street School as a sixth grader. Before this year, James attended a segregated school in a neighboring town. When the Garcias and their special education director began talking about including James in a regular education classroom in his neighborhood school, Mr. and Mrs. Garcia were anxious to learn more. It sounded great, but naturally they had a number of questions and concerns. Would this be best for James? What kind of support would he receive?

The Garcias were introduced to Sharon, the district's Inclusion Facilitator. She came to their home several times to meet James and talk with the family about what supports and information they would need to help James make a smooth transition into a new school and a new classroom. Sharon offered the Garcias the names of several other parents whose children were included in their neighborhood schools. She introduced James and his parents to the school staff and the team used the C.O.A.C.H. Manual (*Choosing Options and Accommodations for Children*, Giangreco, Cloninger & Iverson, 1993) to write an Individual Education Plan that reflected parental priorities and dreams. There was lengthy discussion about the ways in which James would be fully involved in sixth grade classes, and the family was given information about the many parent-school organizations and events (PTO, parent-volunteer program) that occur throughout the year.

September came quickly, and James entered Main Street School as a sixth grader. As the school year progressed, Sharon maintained contact with the Garcias offering additional assistance with extracurricular activities, after-school friendships, and any other family priorities.

Parents know their children best. Parents are very important team members. When parents and professionals work together — everything is possible.

Valerie Morse

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Involving families in the school lives of their children is critical to the attainment of effective learning outcomes. Most educators agree that students do better in school if their parents are involved. It is also true that families must be supported to take the lead in setting priorities and long-range goals for their children. The best opportunities for learning to be both useful and supported come about when experiences between the school and the home can be bridged on a daily basis. An essential role of the Inclusion Facilitator is coordinating effective home and school collaboration.

The Inclusion Facilitator's role in supporting a family's involvement must take into consideration the values of the family, however they may differ from the Inclusion Facilitator's own values. With encouragement and support, many families can more fully participate in all aspects of the school community, in ways that fit with their own needs and priorities. For example, not all parents want to attend PTO meetings; however, if a family wants to attend, the Inclusion Facilitator could assist them in accessing the supports they require (e.g., transportation, child care).

Some families may have never participated in open houses, school performances, recreation and sports events, field trips, or classroom parties. Perhaps these activities were not offered in previous schools. By providing information about these events, the Inclusion Facilitator will be helping families to participate, if they so choose. Family-to-family connections can be facilitated through this participation because these events focus on shared interests rather than differences.

Full involvement of parents in events specific to their child (parent-teacher conferences, IEP meetings) is essential for reaping the greatest benefit to the student. Things as simple as flexible meeting times and locations, support for transportation, and child care during meetings, can dramatically increase a family's involvement. Facilitating regular communication between home and school (via telephone calls, notebooks, visits, and/or written reports) about progress, homework, relationships, health, and other issues, further connects the school and the home.

The Inclusion Facilitator's role in enhancing a family's ability to fully participate in any and all aspects of their child's education also includes respecting the family as a valuable and accurate source of information about the student. Many parents are asked to speak to their child's class or to the faculty about their child. Families can be invited to provide training in inclusion, collaboration, and high expectations to the school and/or community. By supporting a family's ability to become a visible member of the school community (to the extent that they desire), the Inclusion Facilitator not only enhances one student's school experience but effectively advocates for a fully inclusive school community.

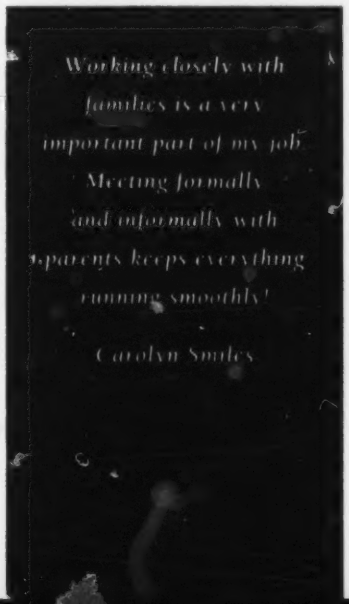
STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Become familiar with the many processes used to ascertain student goals and dreams (MAPS [*Making Action Plans*; Forest, 1989] and C.O.A.C.H. [Giangreco, Cloninger & Iverson, 1993]). Use these and other methods to be certain that family priorities are incorporated into the overall education plan.

2. ***Listen to and respect family values and priorities.*** Teachers, therapists, and other educators flow in and out of a student's world, but parents are in their child's life forever. Seek out information from parents. Respect them for the knowledge and information they can provide.

3. ***Support families and students in their efforts to become involved in extracurricular activities*** in the school and the community. Assist the family in accessing the supports necessary for a student to participate in various typical activities (the drama club, the YMCA, an after-school job).

4. ***Facilitate a communication loop*** between families and teachers. Stay in the loop, but do not supersede the classroom teacher's connection with the parents. Don't forget that informal contact (phone calls, notes home, occasional home visits) can provide a strong link between home and school.


Working closely with families is a very important part of my job. Meeting formally and informally with parents keeps everything running smoothly!
Carolyn Smales

5. ***Model for others*** how the family is an integral part of the student's educational team. Make the family feel welcome, accepted, and respected. Be careful of huge IEP and/or evaluation meetings (refer to "*My Dream IEP Meeting*" in Appendix 2).

6. ***Involve parents*** in workshops, trainings, seminars, and support groups, to the extent they are interested. Provide or seek support so they can attend (offer a ride, seek tuition waivers). Remember that parents are valuable presenters to faculty, school boards, and the community.

7. ***Connect families to one another.*** Provide parents with information on existing parent support organizations, if they desire.

8. ***Connect families to typical school and community organizations*** (PTO, parent volunteer organizations, community recreation groups). Encourage and support parents to become involved in the whole school community, to the extent that they are comfortable.

9. ***Make sure the classroom teacher includes parents*** in all typical teacher-parent connections (parent-teacher conferences, classroom volunteers, field trip chaperons). While IEP and evaluation meetings are important, they should not take the place of typical parent-teacher connections.

Facilitating Peer Supports & Friendships

BEHIND THE SCENES

Her first dance! Janice Hamilton was so excited. As Ms. Hamilton drove her daughter to the high school, she knew just how Janice felt -- she was excited, too, but very nervous, as well.

Just this Fall, Janice entered high school as a tenth grader after having been previously educated in a variety of schools and classes for students with disabilities. Never before had she been a part of typical "teenage" events, never before had she had friends in her own community. Ms. Hamilton was pleased, of course, that Janice was doing so well in school, but she was still anxious about how the evening would go for her daughter. Would anyone be there to meet her? Would anyone dance with her? Would she be alone all night? Ms. Hamilton was prepared to stay at the dance all night if necessary.

As the car pulled up to the school, three of Janice's friends were waiting for her at the door. The girls ran over to the car and began chatting excitedly about who was at the dance and what everyone was wearing. Before Ms. Hamilton could even get out of the car, the girls had helped Janice into her wheelchair and whisked her into the building. They waved Ms. Hamilton away, saying, "She'll be fine, don't worry." Ms. Hamilton watched for as long as she could until the girls disappeared into the building.

The four friends entered the gymnasium and danced, laughed, and talked the night away.

Although this was a night for teenagers, the Inclusion Facilitator was "behind the scenes." When the Inclusion Facilitator heard Janice's friends talking about the year's first dance, he wondered aloud if they needed any support to include Janice in the big night. The girls had it all figured out, but agreed to call Janice's parents to tell them about the dance and what they had planned.

The Inclusion Facilitator volunteered to be a faculty chaperon at the dance, but had no more contact with Janice and her friends than he had with any other students. When the girls planned to go to an ice cream shop after the dance, the Inclusion Facilitator simply encouraged them to problem solve the transportation issue (which they did successfully). Although the Inclusion Facilitator gently facilitated the development of these relationships, he knew enough to quickly move out of the way once real friendships began to form.

It is important to help classroom assistants gain a good sense of when to support and offer assistance and when to pull back so as not to stand in the way of friendships.

Kathy Lanzim

FACILITATING PEER SUPPORTS AND FRIENDSHIPS

The real cement of inclusion is provided through peer acceptance and support. Though relationships and friendships may begin in school, extending them beyond the boundaries of school -- to home and the community -- is a goal.

An oft-named benefit of inclusion is the development of mutually satisfying friendships between students with and without disabilities. When students with disabilities are fully included and valued for their participation in class and school, relationships can develop. However, for many students, especially those who had been segregated for many years, the development of these relationships may need to be facilitated by school and family members. An essential, but sometimes overlooked, role of the Inclusion Facilitator is the facilitation of both friendships and peer supports in and out of school. This may not always be an easy task. Patience, flexibility, and an understanding of everyone's basic needs must be the road map on this journey.

Peer supports and friendships are two components of the kind of support an Inclusion Facilitator may facilitate for a student. It is important to note that peer supports and peer friendships are distinctly different entities. Do not confuse them. *Friendship* occurs when two or more people discover common interests and develop a mutually satisfying relationship. The reinforcement is the relationship itself. *Peer support* is the kind of help one student may give another, sometimes via an adult's request. While it is certainly true that friends often provide support, and peer supports frequently develop into friendships, it is important that the Inclusion Facilitator not confuse the two. Many students with disabilities have an abundance of peer support but too few friends.

Facilitating friendships requires that the age of the student be taken into account. Friendships for very young children naturally include adults (family members, preschool and after-school personnel). Friendships for elementary school students involve increased independence from adults and more emphasis upon other students. Friendships for high school students consist primarily of other high school students, with adults significantly out of the picture. It is essential that these facets be considered by Inclusion Facilitators.

It is also essential to fully involve peers in the facilitation of these relationships. An Inclusion Facilitator can ask peers what supports *they* initially need to develop a relationship with a particular student. Once those supports are provided, the Inclusion Facilitator can step back and let the relationship take hold. Many Inclusion Facilitators skillfully orchestrate situations that support the development of relationships and then quickly get out of the way.

Recognizing that peers are a reservoir of resourceful and creative ideas, an Inclusion Facilitator can facilitate peer supports by asking peers to help a student fully participate in class and school. By including peers in the problem-solving process, they are given the opportunity to become true supports to a student, and not simply "peer tutors." When an Inclusion Facilitator assists peers and adults in acknowledging that all of us are interdependent, natural and satisfying relationships can develop.

STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE PEER SUPPORTS AND FRIENDSHIPS

Become aware of the "big picture" for each student. Explore with the student, family, and peers their dreams for the present and future. Together, develop strategies to facilitate relationships.

2. *Become familiar with processes such as Circles of Friends and MAPS* (Forest, 1989) which can facilitate the beginning of friendships and supports for students.

3. *Advocate for full access to any program*, service, or recreational opportunity (in school and out) a student desires. Be a resource to facilitate the supports necessary to ensure full participation. Be available to follow up as a resource person if necessary.

4. *Model ways for other teachers and students* to include a student in all activities. Use respectful language and a positive attitude.

5. *Assist others to recognize the differences* between peer supports and friends. Be aware of the benefits of true friendships in and out of school and your role in making them happen.

6. *Communicate and collaborate closely and often* with a student's family to ensure that friendships can continue outside of the school building.

7. *Meet regularly with teachers*, classroom assistants, parents, administrators, and related service professionals to discuss friendships and to develop strategies for peer supports.

8. *Enlist the help of all school staff* (secretary, custodian, principal, guidance counselor) to provide support to students, but never at the expense of peer relationships.

9. *Ask peers to be a part of the planning process* for an individual student. Utilize their ideas on classroom strategies, after-school activities, friendships, and supports.

Being involved with a circle of friends has been a real learning experience for me. I have found that kids have more ideas and are more sophisticated thinkers than I would have given them credit for.

Maureen Hatton

Modifying Curriculum

WORKING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

For two years, Paula attended a regional program for students with disabilities. This year she enters third grade in her neighborhood school. As part of the transition, Paula's new teacher and the school's Inclusion Facilitator spent time observing Paula in the regional program and talking with the program's teachers. The third grade teacher noted right away that what Paula was doing in the special education class was very different from what went on in third grade. "What could Paula accomplish in my class?" the concerned third grade teacher asked the Inclusion Facilitator.

The Inclusion Facilitator and the teacher spent several hours talking about what they had observed and what it would be like for Paula in third grade. It wasn't wise nor desirable for the third grade to duplicate the class in which Paula was now enrolled, the Inclusion Facilitator reassured the teacher. "In fact," she said, "the primary benefit of inclusion is that in your class, Paula will be learning how to be a successful student, and that will ultimately help her to become a successful adult."

Together, the teacher and the Inclusion Facilitator discussed the lessons, content, and structure of third grade and the importance of maintaining that integrity. With this as a base, they then discussed Paula's IEP goals. The Inclusion Facilitator and the teacher "brainstormed" how these goals could be met within the context of third grade lessons and everyday routines. The more they talked, the more they began to develop ways of including Paula into the class. The Inclusion Facilitator smiled when the teacher told her, "When Paula joins my class, *all* of my students are going to learn things that will ultimately make them more successful adults."

Throughout the school year, the Inclusion Facilitator met regularly with the classroom teacher to develop strategies for Paula to fully participate in all aspects of her class and to use those opportunities to teach her valuable knowledge and skills. The Inclusion Facilitator did not plan lessons for Paula -- instead she worked with the classroom teacher to modify, when necessary, the class lessons and materials. As the year drew to a close, the teacher celebrated how much she and Paula had learned.

Once a week I meet with teachers to discuss upcoming lesson plans. By talking about lessons and activities ahead of time, we can make meaningful modifications.

Michelle Waldron

MODIFYING CURRICULUM

"What can this student do during this lesson?" is a question commonly asked by teachers who have a new student with disabilities in their classroom. The ability of the Inclusion Facilitator to respond to the classroom teacher's query in both a direct and collaborative manner is pivotal to successful inclusion. An Inclusion Facilitator has a dual role to play to ensure that the classroom teacher is the primary person facilitating the learning of all students in the class. That dual role is providing the teacher with useful ideas for adapting activities and curriculum, and supporting the teacher so that she/he will begin to naturally plan day-to-day learning opportunities for *every* student.

Many new Inclusion Facilitators struggle with their role in curriculum modification. Perhaps more familiar with planning lessons for students with disabilities, they may begin their job by providing a classroom teacher with alternative lessons for an individual student to work on during classroom lessons. *We strongly discourage this involvement* -- the negative message that this approach conveys is three-fold: only the Inclusion Facilitator can provide appropriate lessons plans for this student; the classroom teacher's role in this student's education is merely to provide a place for learning rather than to be the student's primary teacher; and, this student is dramatically different from all other students and cannot participate in most classroom lessons and activities. Obviously, these are *not* the messages that the Inclusion Facilitator wants to convey. This approach inevitably leads to a message of separateness as opposed to one of inclusion.

All Inclusion Facilitators need to heed this caution. The Inclusion Facilitator does not provide alternative lessons and/or materials for a student, instead she/he collaborates with the classroom teacher to ensure that all students participate -- and learn -- from the regular education curriculum. The regular education curriculum must be the starting point from which all modifications are made.

The Inclusion Facilitator and the classroom teacher work together to make modifications to the materials and/or the expectations of class lessons. All modifications should respect the age and the grade of the student and should adhere to the concept of comparable challenge. Additionally, all modifications should reflect high expectations for every student.

The Inclusion Facilitator can also support the classroom teacher in recognizing the numerous opportunities that exist throughout the school day for a student to learn valuable skills. For example, practicing reading skills in the cafeteria and learning dressing skills in physical education class, can support a student's learning in natural environments. Because it is the classroom teacher who is with the student throughout the school day, the role of the Inclusion Facilitator is to work with the teacher to identify and take advantage of these natural learning opportunities.

When Inclusion Facilitators see their role as offering support to classroom teachers around curriculum modification, classroom teachers are better able to see their role as teachers of *all* students.

STRATEGIES FOR MODIFYING CURRICULUM

Ask the classroom teacher what she/he needs from you to successfully teach all students in the class. Be flexible in providing the supports that the teacher requests.

2. ***Encourage a team effort*** by acknowledging the classroom teacher's role as the primary educator for all students. The team process should include peers -- they will have ideas to help the student fully participate in all class lessons. Include parents in this process. Remember, they know their child best.

3. ***Review the "Curriculum Modification and Student Supports" chart.*** Share this information with others. Remember that the regular education curriculum is the basis from which all modifications are made. (Refer to the Appendix 3.)

4. ***Become familiar with augmentative communication strategies and devices, including facilitated communication.*** Supporting a student who does not speak or does not speak clearly with a means to communicate should be a top priority.

5. ***Meet regularly with the classroom teacher*** -- weekly if possible -- to discuss classroom strategies. Use these meetings to plan strategies for future lessons ("How can we include Graham in the Science Fair?") rather than simply as "progress reports" ("How did last week go?").

6. ***Learn everything you can about innovative teaching strategies*** (Reading and Writing Process, Cooperative Learning, experiential math and science). Join classroom teachers in attending training sessions and workshops. Share written materials and encourage others to respect the unique learning styles of all students.

7. ***Become knowledgeable about curriculum modification and classroom strategies*** by reading materials and attending trainings. (See Appendix 4 for a list of resources.)

8. ***Have high expectations for all students*** and convey this to the student, peers, family, and teachers. Provide challenging learning opportunities for all students by assuming competence and ability.

9. ***Use the C.O.A.C.H. Manual*** (Giangreco, Cloninger & Iverson, 1993) to construct matrices which help teachers to prioritize students' goals and work on them throughout the school day.

Curriculum modification doesn't mean writing a separate curriculum. It means adapting the regular curriculum. The inclusion facilitator and teacher need to work together to make this happen.

Marty Rounds

Collaboration

FOUR WAY STREET

Sue Lockmeyer, principal of South Elementary School, welcomed the faculty to the annual spring meeting. This was Ms. Lockmeyers favorite meeting, the staff was always full of ideas for making the next school year even better than the previous one. This year's agenda included introducing the staff to the school's new Inclusion Facilitator, Kevin Mahoney. Though the faculty was well-versed in the concept of inclusion -- many had attended workshops on classroom strategies, facilitated communication, and the value of diversity -- they did have questions as to what role the Inclusion Facilitator would play in their school.

Ms. Lockmeyer began the meeting with one word -- 'Collaboration! Collaboration is the word that perfectly describes how we can best answer the needs of all of our students." She continued, "I'd like you to meet Kevin Mahoney, our new Inclusion Facilitator. He is here to answer your questions."

Kevin Mahoney smiled as he began to explain what his role would be at South Elementary. "I'd like to meet with individual teachers," he said, "and together, we can develop a mutually agreed upon schedule of weekly meetings. Some teachers might choose to meet during their established planning periods; others may feel best about meeting before or after school. Some others, Kevin said, "may ask me to teach their class once a week" to provide them with an additional planning period. "As an Inclusion Facilitator, I do not have any direct teaching assignments, which affords me the freedom to meet your scheduling needs," Kevin explained further.

September came, and the school year began with weekly meetings between Kevin and individual teachers (with other team members attending as needed). During these meetings, they worked on curriculum modification, facilitation of friendships, the coordination of related services, and anything else necessary to assist the teacher in successfully educating a particular student. As the school year progressed, everyone agreed that the focus of the meetings needed to change. No longer did they need to exclusively discuss one student -- they now discussed innovative teaching strategies for all students. Kevin became a resource to the entire class.

Spring neared, and Ms. Lockmeyer began to put together the agenda for next year's meeting. "Why tamper with success?" she thought, with a smile. "Collaboration is working so well, perhaps that is just the word I'll begin with again at next year's meeting."

Keeping the lines of communication open is one of the most important supports. Talk, listen, and respect one another's contributions. This is the key to success.

Camille Valenza

COLLABORATION

Inclusive education will become truly self-sustaining only when school personnel feel enabled to teach all students together in regular classrooms. Professionals, who once worked in isolation, must join forces to provide comprehensive supports and services to all students in regular education classrooms. The Inclusion Facilitator's role is to collaborate with educators, related service providers, parents, and students to ensure a student's full and equal participation in all school and class activities.

The regular education classroom is rich with learning opportunities for all students. Throughout the day, there are numerous opportunities for students to learn valuable skills and knowledge. The team -- parents, students, educators, related service providers -- must work together to identify these opportunities, and support the student's ability to participate in them all. Through collaboration, members can bring their respective expertise and experiences to the table and decide upon the best ways to facilitate a student's full involvement.

Collaboration is best viewed as a "four way" street." All team members are responsible for the student's total participation and learning in the classroom. No longer do members of the team take responsibility for only their goals. For example, in the past, a physical therapist may have worked on a student's "gross motor" goals -- independently and in an isolated environment. Now, that same physical therapist works closely with all other team members to support the student in her/his ability to use those skills throughout the entire day.

Collaboration works best when it is seen as a joint tenet based on equality, respect, and a commitment to problem-solving. Effective collaboration involves parents, students, educators, classroom assistants, and related services providers all viewing themselves and each other as valued and equal members of the team. A shared commitment to the ideals of inclusive education is essential. Because the team must work together to solve problems and brainstorm ideas, it is important that the team conveys to all members a sense of trust and respect.

It goes without saying that the Inclusion Facilitator is a team player. Additionally, the Inclusion Facilitator may be given the role of "team coordinator" -- she/he manages the organization of the team process (meeting times, meeting minutes) but supports the family, student, and teachers to take the lead in goal setting, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The collaborative team process is essential to successful inclusion. Inclusion Facilitators should become knowledgeable and supportive of the process, and work diligently to include this in every student's educational experiences.

Collaboration means "giving" as well as receiving ideas from teachers, therapists, parents, and students. "All of us have to believe that we can learn from one another.

Camille Valenza

STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATION

1. ***Include yourself in the mainstream of the school*** by attending all general faculty and grade level meetings. Volunteer for school committees, chaperon school dances, and advise extracurricular clubs. Assume lunch duty, recess duty, and bus duty like all other teachers. Eat lunch in the teachers' room and attend faculty parties. Convey the message that you are an equal member of the school community.

2. ***Continue to educate yourself on best practices*** in education, both regular (cooperative learning, critical skills training) and disability-oriented (facilitated communication, assistive technology). Share this information with others.

3. ***Eliminate the division between regular and special education*** in everything you do. Move yourself out of the special education office. Move your books into the library and your materials into the general curriculum closet.

4. ***Get to know classroom activities*** and the flow of classrooms. Offer to teach lessons to a class. Switch roles with a classroom teacher for a day. Divide responsibilities among all team members so that no one feels overwhelmed.

5. ***Volunteer to cover classes for a teacher*** so that she/he can attend an IEP meeting, a training, or visit another school. Do this often at the end of the school year to allow teachers to observe their future students.

6. ***Meet regularly with classroom teachers***, assistants, related service providers, and parents. Keep them informed of trainings, materials, and interesting information.

7. ***Be respectful of classroom integrity***. Arrange observation times that are convenient for the teacher. Make sure that your supports fit with the style of the teacher and the classroom.

8. ***Learn more about collaboration and consultation***. Attend trainings and review written materials. Help classroom teachers and parents acquire this knowledge.

9. ***Arrange a flexible, but realistic, daily schedule***. Build in time for planning meetings, paperwork, phone calls, etc.

10. ***Connect yourself and classroom teachers with other educators*** across your state. Visit colleagues and encourage them to visit your school.

Coordination of Supports

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Adding their son Daniel's name to the list of three year olds registered for preschool was very exciting for Mr. and Ms. Greene. They had been planning this for a long time and they knew Daniel would be happy in the local community preschool program. For the past few months, the Greenes had been meeting with Maria Dowd, the school district's Inclusion Facilitator. They knew that, if they all worked together, Daniel would do just fine.

Maria attended several meetings with the Greenes, the teachers at the preschool, and other team members who had worked with Daniel and his family. It was important to identify what supports would be needed for Daniel to be successful in preschool.

At the first meeting, Maria asked the Greenes what supports they felt were important. "I've read about facilitated communication," Mr. Greene answered, "and I'd like it to be introduced to Daniel." Ms. Greene agreed with her husband, then added, "I also think that Daniel needs to be supported to become more independent in his mobility. I'd like to see these two things at the top of the list."

The team quickly responded. It was agreed that Maria and one of the preschool teachers would introduce Daniel to facilitated communication. The team would also arrange for Daniel, his parents, and the district's physical therapist to go to the assistive technology center to learn more about motorized wheelchairs and other mobility supports. Maria volunteered to keep the entire team informed about these visits through written notes and phone calls.

Maria then asked the preschool teachers, "What supports will you need to feel successful including Daniel in all aspects of preschool?" The teachers, too, wanted to learn more about facilitated communication. They also said it was important to have regular contact with the Greene family. "How about if we write notes to each other every day?" Ms. Greene asked. That would be great, the teachers agreed. "We'd also like to meet with you and your husband regularly," said one teacher, "to make sure that we all agree that we're doing the best for Daniel." Maria helped them set up a monthly schedule of meetings. "I'll be at the meetings, too," said Maria, "and I have some information about curriculum modification that I can share with you. We can also schedule some after-school trainings for the entire preschool staff, if you'd like."

So Daniel began his school "career" in a preschool with teachers and team members who felt supported while supporting him. Everyone worked together to make it a great year.

It's important to look at the student's entire day. It's better to provide related service support at a time when the student needs it, rather than during the "free slot" in the therapist's day.

Valerie Morse

COORDINATION OF SUPPORTS

By now you know that we define inclusion as educating all students in age-appropriate regular education classes in their neighborhood schools. But just as important to that definition is the provision of the proper supports so that the students, teachers, and classes can be successful. Coordination of these supports is an essential role of the Inclusion Facilitator.

An Inclusion Facilitator defines these supports by asking the students, families, and teachers what supports they think are necessary to facilitate full inclusion. Once ascertained, the Inclusion Facilitator helps the team to determine the most natural ways of achieving those supports.

All students and teachers need support to maximize the education that occurs daily in and out of school. Using *natural supports* conveys the message that all students and teachers require support from one another. Natural supports to teachers may include regular meetings with colleagues, staff development opportunities, meetings with parents and students to review goals and progress, and consultations with other school personnel (reading specialist, physical education teacher). Natural supports to students may include peer support (reading partners, cooperative learning groups), classroom assistants, and extra help from the classroom teacher.

Some students may also require additional supports in order to be successful -- these can include assistive technology, related services, and friendship facilitation, for example. The Inclusion Facilitator coordinates these additional supports by bringing together the student's team to discuss the best ways to introduce the supports into the student's life. The Inclusion Facilitator does not decide upon the appropriate supports for a student -- instead she/he brings together the resources and the knowledge to achieve success.

While the classroom teacher takes the lead in determining what supports she/he needs, the Inclusion Facilitator is responsive to these requests. For example, if a classroom teacher expresses the need to have planning time, additional training, and/or assistance in the classroom, the Inclusion Facilitator becomes a resource to achieve these supports. The Inclusion Facilitator may also act as an advocate for the classroom teacher when needed. If a teacher's request for support is not granted, the Inclusion Facilitator may suggest alternative supports, and/or advocate with the teacher to receive the requested supports.

Additionally, the Inclusion Facilitator also has the responsibility of coordinating many of the legal requirements for an individual student. Often referred to as "the paperwork" of special education, attending to such things as the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and evaluations constitutes a significant aspect of the Inclusion Facilitator's responsibilities. The Inclusion Facilitator does not have sole responsibility for writing IEPs and evaluations, but rather coordinates the team members who contribute to this process. Likewise, the Inclusion Facilitator may assist a classroom teacher in writing progress notes and report cards, but the classroom teacher assumes the primary role in this task.

By coordinating supports for teachers and students, the Inclusion Facilitator plays an essential role in making sure that inclusion truly is successful.

STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATING SUPPORTS

Always ask the classroom teacher how you can best provide support to the classroom. Be flexible in your approach, and recognize that not all teachers will want you to support them in the same way.

2. ***Ask students, families, and teachers how to best provide support*** to an individual student. Remember, the people who know the student best must be supported to offer suggestions and strategies.

3. ***Recognize the availability of natural supports*** in all school and class environments. Use "special" supports only when natural supports cannot achieve the goal.

4. ***Ensure that the classroom teacher is given support*** to take the lead on report cards, parent conferences, and progress reports. Offer to cover a teacher's class so that she/he can meet with parents or write reports. Provide support and input but recognize the teacher as the primary educator.

5. ***Become familiar with resources that are available*** to provide supports to students (for example, an assistive technology resource center). Make sure that students have opportunities to access state-of-the-art equipment and materials.

6. ***Recognize the student's peers as valuable supports.*** Include them in the problem-solving process. Respect their contributions.

7. ***Make certain that supports are provided out of need and not habit.*** Examine and re-examine supports to make sure they are appropriate. Remember support needs change as the student and the situation changes.

8. ***Provide supports in ways that facilitate a student's full participation.*** Be careful of giving a student "too much support." This can actually become a barrier to inclusion.

9. ***Assign paraprofessionals to classrooms not students.*** Make sure they are viewed as classroom assistants and not individual aides.

10. ***Support, support, support.*** Remember the role of the Inclusion Facilitator is to assist and support classroom teachers so that they are best able to teach *all* students.

One day a classroom teacher said to me, "I really appreciate all of the support, but sometimes there are so many adults in my classroom, it feels like a cocktail party. I wonder if I should be teaching or serving hor d'oeuvres!"

Maureen Hufton

Conclusion

MAGGIE'S STORY REVISITED

Five years ago Maggie made a wish she knew would come true. She wished that all schools would realize the benefits of educating all students in regular education classrooms, and special educators would recognize the important role they played in the process. She hoped that her colleagues would move out of special education classes, and into regular classrooms to support teachers and students. And she hoped that someday there would be plenty of educators throughout the state doing what I'm doing, because it's the right thing to do, and it works."

Maggie's someday has arrived! There are many special educators in New Hampshire whose job titles and job responsibilities have changed to better support all students in regular education. Maggie is no longer the only Inclusion Facilitator in the state and she now meets regularly with Inclusion Facilitators from other schools to share ideas and strategies. In the beginning, these meetings focused on the difficult issues each Inclusion Facilitator faced in her/his new role. They shared their struggles, their mistakes, and their commitment. Today, while there is still time for problem-solving, the Inclusion Facilitators share success stories and offer each other encouragement and support.

Maggie knows that there will always be new questions to answer and new problems to solve in the quest for equity and excellence in education. But she and her colleagues are confident that they are on the right track.

Maggie now has a new wish for the future. She says, "I hope that someday we will no longer have to use the word "inclusion" when we talk about education for students with disabilities. When we say education we will naturally be talking about all students. Perhaps someday the role of the Inclusion Facilitators will change once more and my colleagues and I will take our places as educators for all kids!"

Being an Inclusion Facilitator is a hard but rewarding job. Everyday I see students doing things that no one ever thought was possible. Inclusion really works!

Maureen Hutton

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We wish to thank our editor, Ellen T. Frisina, for her ability to find the words to express our beliefs. Linda Harmon, our graphic designer, for the beauty of her designs, and of course, Gary Samson, our friend and colleague, for the photographs that capture the essence of inclusive education in our state.

Our special thanks to Stephanie Powers for her commitment to inclusive schools and communities in New Hampshire and now nationally; and Carolyn Rudy for her dedication, to this project during her tenure at the Institute.

We would like to thank all of the school communities that are committed to inclusion, and that value the gifts and abilities of all learners. We recognize and appreciate the contributions of those who work collaboratively with Inclusion Facilitators throughout the state:

- classroom teachers who warmly welcome students with disabilities into their classrooms
- families who provide guidance, insight, and commitment
- paraprofessionals who support students and teachers with skill and creativity
- related service providers who consult with teachers and families to design inclusive supports
- administrators who lead with their innovation and vision
- students for finding the solutions the rest of us are not always able to see.

And of course we have the deepest appreciation for all New Hampshire Inclusion Facilitators. We thank them for demonstrating their commitment to inclusive education, in word and deed, everyday.

"As a team we meet on a regular basis to regroup, reassess, and to share "hurrahs"! While it is important to work together to solve the challenges it is just as important to share the joys."

Rhonda Morgan

APPENDIX #1

IS IT REALLY INCLUSION?

Inclusion. A simple word. A simple concept. *"All students educated in regular education classes in their neighborhood schools and the supports provided to students and teachers so that all can be successful."* Why then is there so much confusion as to what it really means? As the familiarity with the word inclusion grows, so does the opportunity for the word to be used to describe (and even justify) practices that are not truly inclusive. Have you ever heard of an "inclusive classroom" where 23 of the 25 students receive special education support services? Or an "inclusive school" into which students from other towns are bussed to attend regular classes? Clearly these are not examples of inclusion, but examples of the word inclusion being used to describe non-desirable educational practices.

Below is a checklist to help teachers, parents, and administrators determine if their schools practices are truly inclusive. Although the checklist does not contain every indicator of inclusion, it can provide you with a guideline for your school's practices and philosophy.

IS IT REALLY INCLUSION?

Use this checklist to determine if your school/school district's practices and philosophy support inclusion. Every YES answer indicates an inclusive practice. Every NO answer indicates an area of need.

1. Do all students attend the school and class they would attend if they did not have disabilities (NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL)?	YES	NO
2. Do all students attend regular education classes appropriate to their CHRONOLOGICAL AGE?	YES	NO
3. Do students with disabilities attend regular education classes on a FULL TIME basis (i.e., receive all support services in the classroom, follow same schedule as other students)?	YES	NO
4. Do regular education classes have a NATURAL PROPORTION of students with and without disabilities in the class (approximately 10-15% of students in the class receive special education support)?	YES	NO
5. Do students with disabilities use the same places and services as other students (i.e., regular transportation, cafeteria, bathrooms)?	YES	NO
6. Do students with disabilities receive the SUPPORTS they need to be successful in the classroom (i.e., curriculum modification, assistive technology, adult and peer assistance, etc.)?	YES	NO
7. Do teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms receive the SUPPORTS necessary for them to successfully teach all students in their class (i.e., planning time, consultation and collaboration with specialists, classroom support, training, etc.)?	YES	NO
8. Are PARENTS of students with disabilities given every opportunity to be full participants in their child's education?	YES	NO
9. Does your school have a PHILOSOPHY that respects all students as learners and contributing members of the classroom and school community?	YES	NO
10. Does your school have a TASK FORCE to address the issues indicated by "no" answers on this checklist?	YES	NO

Reprinted from Innovations. Winter 1993. Institute on Disability/UAP, University of New Hampshire

APPENDIX #2

MY DREAM IEP MEETING

By Beth Dixon

Beth Dixon, a business woman from Concord, has four children, ages 8-20. Andrew is her youngest and attends second grade at Conant Elementary School.

Wouldn't it be great if parents could look forward to their child's IEP meetings? If they could go knowing they would walk out feeling good, proud, and satisfied? For many years, as the date of my son's IEP meeting drew near, knots would form in my stomach. I knew several things would characterize the meeting. The room would be filled with too many people, sometimes as many as 21, all eager to push for their own agendas. The meeting would begin with evaluations, present levels, and a list of things that Andrew could *not* do. About then, the tension would grow into a sick feeling. Goals had been written by specialists who discussed how they were going to "fix" Andrew's problems, with the hopes of "getting him ready" for a regular classroom (7 out of 10 times, with 85% accuracy). By the time the meeting ended, my husband and I were so drained and depressed it was hard to function.

We've come a long way from those discouraging times. What has changed? Andrew is now a full time member of a regular second grade class in our neighborhood school. We meet with just the immediate team (parents, teacher, integration facilitator, therapists) and begin with positive stories of what has happened in the classroom and on the playground, stories of friendships and skills that are growing. We list Andrew's strengths, and discuss his weaknesses by deciding what can be done to improve the quality of his day to make it meaningful for him. We talk about a beautiful child and his gifts, the things he is learning and what other children are learning from him. When we set goals no one cares that Andrew doesn't isolate his index finger on command 2 out of 3 times. We care that he is doing the same thing as the rest of the class. We depend upon our dreams to set goals for Andrew that will help him succeed in society when his school days are over. My husband and I now leave IEP meetings in a positive frame of mind and are very proud to be Andrew's parents. He is a wonderful little boy with many gifts to share and they are now recognized. My dream is that all parents can experience this kind of IEP meeting and let those memories of former meetings slip into the past.

How to Create a Dream IEP Meeting

- Limit the number of people to key players.
- Have the meeting in a regular education setting.
- Make sure the team has a shared vision for the student.
- Start off with the positives. Try to imagine how it would feel to hear only the weaknesses of someone you love.
- Write goals that enhance the student's ability to participate in typical opportunities, now and in the future.
- Invite peers to be part of the IEP process.

Reprinted from Innovations, Spring 1991, Institute on Disability/UAP, University of New Hampshire.

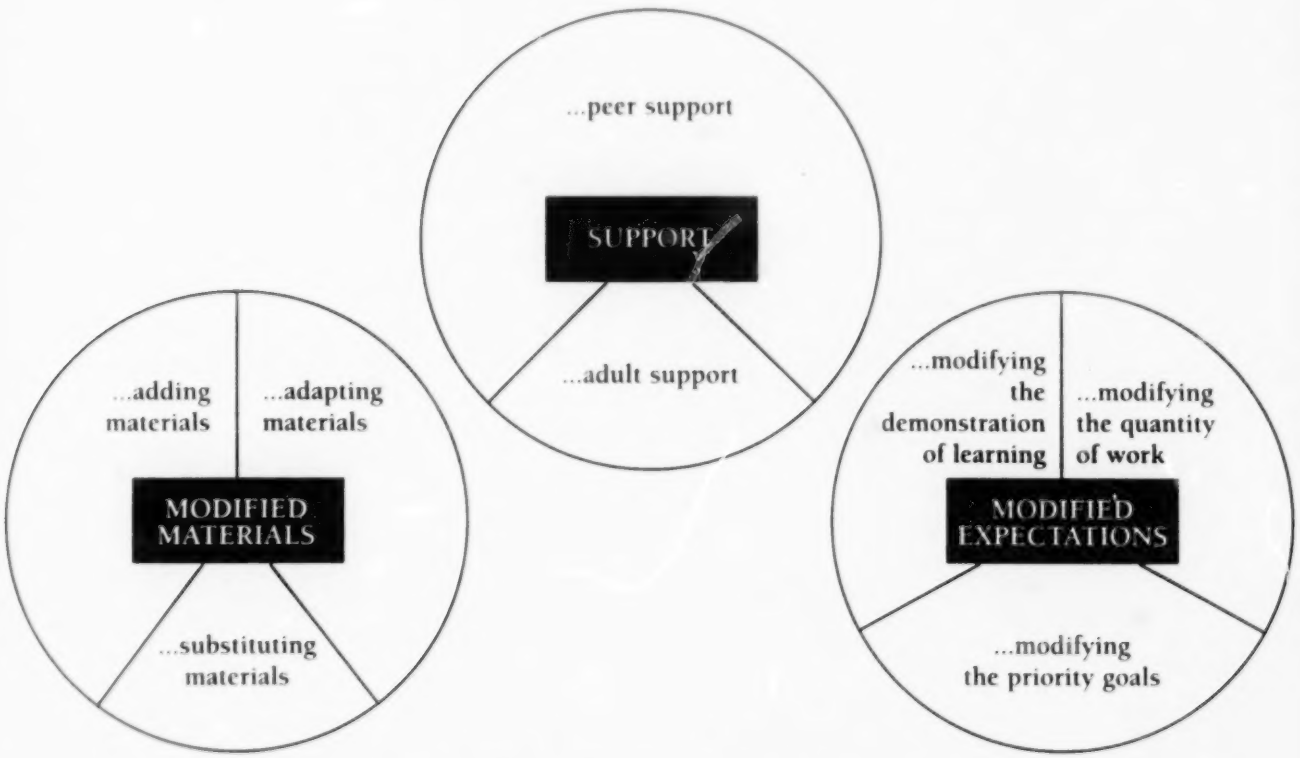
APPENDIX #3

CURRICULUM MODIFICATION AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

1. Can the student participate in this lesson in the same way as all other students?

If ***YES*** — stop here If ***NO*** — go on to question #2.

2. Which of the following supports and/or modifications (one or more) are necessary for the student's full participation in this lesson?



- Does the student have all of the ***necessary supports*** (e.g., technology, medical, family involvement)?
- Does the student have a way to ***communicate all day long?***
- Are all modifications and materials ***age-appropriate?***
- Are modifications made taking into consideration the concept of ***comparable challenge?***
- Are all modifications made keeping in mind the ***highest expectations?***
- Does the student have opportunities to ***give as well as receive*** support?
- Has the student been given all of the necessary instructional opportunities to gain ***core skills*** (reading, math, and writing)?

Reprinted from *From Special to Regular, From Ordinary to Extraordinary*, Institute on Disability/UAP, University of New Hampshire, 1993.

APPENDIX #4

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